WORKSHOP'S FINEST

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HISTORICAL REVISIONISM IN TEAM FORTRESS 2

#BRINGBACKQUICKPLAY

TF2 SUMMER 2025 UPDATE & NEW MVM UPDATE?!

ISSUE III • JUNE-JULY 2025

https://valvearchive.com/archive/Team%20Fortress/Team%20Fortress%202/Art/Environment%20Art/Desert/ - deserttower.jpg

The Workshop's Finest (WF) Magazine is a monthly publication by the TF2 Nexus group, dedicated to showcasing the TF2 community's Workshop creations, recent TF2 news, guides, and player opinions. This non-profit publication is run entirely by volunteers from the TF2 Nexus team. We are not affiliated with Valve Software—this magazine is a community-driven project.

CONTENTS

ISSUE III • JUNE-JULY 2025

FEATURES

Summer Update 2025
Cover Story | Article by Endi

New Mann VS Machine Update?!
News | Article by SimplyKat*

#BringBackQuickplay

WF Magazine Workshop Picks of June-July 2025
Cosmetics, Maps, Weapons, Taunts, War Paints, and Unusual Effects

ARTICLES

Corporations Are Not Your Friend
Opinions & Takes | Article by SimplyKat*

COMMUNITY

Community Reactions to the Summer 2025 Update
Opinions & Takes | Article by Endi

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THE ISSUE'S COVER
Illustration by KayEF

The Team Fortress 2 Summer 2025 Update: A Community Reacts

When Valve dropped the Summer 2025 Update for Team Fortress 2 on July 24, 2025, it came wrapped in cautious optimism. After years of sporadic updates and community pressure over issues like bots and maintenance, many players hoped this seasonal patch would bring meaningful content. What they got, however, was a mix of excitement, disappointment, and debate. Here's how the community has been reacting to the Summer 2025 Update.

What the update delivered:

- **10 new maps (various modes: Payload, Control Point, KOTH, CTF)**
- **23 new cosmetic items**
- **4 new taunts**
- **14 new Unusual effects in total (7 for cosmetics, 7 for taunts)**

1. Mixed feelings about maps

The maps brought in the most discussion—some players commending ambition, others critiquing poor gameplay execution.
On Reddit in r/truetf2, people shared first impressions (just after a day of play) that were somewhat harsh:

“I am convinced this might be the worst KoTH map ever added to TF2. This map is a total clusterfuck … just… try to do anything other than spam.” Reddit

Some players expressed disappointment in the choice or balance of gimmicks, sightlines, size, or pathing. A recurring sentiment: aesthetics and visual themes seemed prioritized over flow, class balance, or performance.

As one player put it:

“The maps sure look pretty but play terribly. They’re all either insanely small or insanely large and have terrible routing.” Reddit

That said, not all feedback was negative. Some community members appreciated experimentation and creative risks, even if the results weren’t perfect.

2. “Mid” tone: not bad, not great

A common baseline reaction among more veteran and critical players was that the update was “mid” — middling, with positive intentions but flawed execution.

On r/tf2, one thread is titled:

“The 2025 Summer update is PAINFULLY mid … but there is potential”
Some YouTubers echoed this.
One video’s title:

“[TF2] Summer 2025 – It Isn’t Perfect”

Another:
“TF2’s New Summer Update is… Strange”

Players weren’t overwhelmingly excited, but they acknowledged that this update might serve as a stepping stone—especially if future updates build on its framework.

So, how does it land?

In sum, reactions to the Summer 2025 Update have been mixed:

Wins: Some cosmetics/unusuals, community involvement, restoring some player confidence, modest Steam chart success.

Weak spots: map quality and balance, coinciding performance issues, the sense of “half-done” rather than bold.

Still, for a game over 18 years old, it’s notable that TF2 can still generate buzz, controversy, and hope. The Summer 2025 Update may not be a home run, but it reopened a dialog between devs and players, and set the stage for what could be more meaningful content later this year.

Cosmetics
JUNE-JULY 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

“Jar-Head”

Class: Solider
Item Slot: Headgear, Misc
Other: Certified Compatible, Summer
By Big Bob and Square

"Swampmann's Swagger" Set

Class: Sniper
Item Slot: Headgear, Misc
Other: Halloween, Smissmas, Summer
By Danksy and Tabby.

“Boot Camper” Set

Class: Scout
Item Slot: Headgear, Misc
Other: Certified Compatible, Summer
By Pie_Savvy, Strno8 / Patrezak and Tabby

Maps
JUNE-JULY 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

Bumble Fumble

Bumblefumble is a 4-point Payload map taking you through the Autumn countryside where there's been a recent and sudden boom in honey-based products. Where did this sudden interest come from? Well... seems like someone managed to get their hands on some Australian honey bees that happen to produce honey laced with Australium! Red team took note of this and took over the Australium Honey facility.

Recycler

Welcome to the junkyard. Fight over rusted out metal on a crisp desert night. Feed the grinder with as much of the stuff as you can get and don't let the other guys do the same. Watch out though, the junkyard is a dangerous place and the grinder isn't picky about what it devours, nor is the crane concerned with what it may flatten!

Coyote

A small KOTH arena designed for fun. After a long time away from this game, I wanted to go back and relive some of the vintage nostalgia by creating a level that would serve as a nod to the original and classic maps from the game such as Dustbowl and Harvest.

Taunts
JUNE-JULY 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

The Critical Fail
Type: All-class Taunt
Other: Certified Compatible, Summer
By Steaky

No Time to Cloak
Type: Class-specific Taunt
Class: Spy
Other: Certified Compatible, Summer
By john

Heartbreaker
Type: Class-specific Taunt
Class: Medic
Other: Certified Compatible, Summer
By Kylul, Elo, Steve Gomez

War Paints
JUNE-JULY 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

Soaring Tiger
By Auriee and Tricky Biz

Gunmetal Excavator Mk.II
By Vodest

Service Grade
By Voosh

Unusuals
JUNE-JULY 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

Signal Disruptor
By Chanakin

Bug Zapper
By Elo, GupMCgill and Bamboo

Heatwave
By Sley GD and Pop

Now introducing...

Laughing Gas

By Cipherlock, Benrey Calhoun, Yamiko / Apzoly and Bagul

Wet Feet

By Bambo

Graveyard Shift

By Cipherlock, Folvaen, Yamiko / Apzoly and Bagul

SPELLS!

An Open Letter to Valve Software from the *Team Fortress 2* Community

Valve Software, *Team Fortress 2* Developer Team
10400 NE 4th Street, Floor 14
Bellevue, WA 98004
USA

July 27, 2025

To whom it may concern at Valve:

The following is an open letter from the general Team Fortress 2 Community regarding the game's current matchmaking system.

Team Fortress 2, as we know, is a class-based, team-focused shooter that thrives on dynamic, emergent gameplay. Every match is shaped not just by raw skill, but by teamwork, creativity, and adaptability. These traits, combined with the game's chaotic charm, are what have kept players coming back for nearly 20 years.

However, for the past nine years, since the Meet Your Match update, TF2 has been constrained by a fundamentally flawed matchmaking system known as Casual Mode, which replaced the original and more reliable Quickplay system. Casual Mode was introduced without prior warning or community input, and it arrived in an unplayable, unstable, and deeply unpopular state for almost a year after its release. While the current Casual Mode is functional and has made improvements since its introduction, we believe it still imposes limitations that don't align with how TF2 is best played and enjoyed. Specifically, Casual's structure often creates friction for players looking for easy-going, social, and flexible match experiences. Based on community feedback, here are the core concerns:

- **Glicko-based matchmaking** often results in one-sided matches, with little opportunity for rebalancing mid-game. Unlike previous systems that allowed dynamic team scrambling, TF2's implementation assumes consistent individual performance in a team-based game, resulting in frustration for both new and experienced players.
- **The Party System** only allows up to 6 players to play together, making it take longer to get into a server than an ad-hoc connection.
- **Slot Reservation** causes servers to fill more slowly, which delays team balancing and often leads to one-sided matches. Since reserved slots are counted as real players, the game's autobalance system doesn't activate properly, leaving teams uneven for extended periods.
- **Matches are short** due to them using a best-of-3 system or a single-round limit instead of having a 45-minute map timer.
- **Map Voting Bugs** have gone unfixed for nearly a decade, sometimes preventing players from even selecting their preferred map.
- **Team Switching** is no longer an option that allows friends to play alongside or against each other if desired at the current moment.
- **Pre-round timers** are excessively long and make matches feel slow to start.

These changes not only affected match quality; they also disrupted TF2's social fabric. The removal of Quickplay abruptly dismantled the ecosystem of vanilla community servers. Previously, Quickplay acted as a gateway, directing players into

community-hosted servers and helping maintain healthy populations. With its removal, these servers lost visibility and accessibility, causing player counts to drop sharply. Many communities that had thrived for years were suddenly left without traffic, leading to widespread server shutdowns and the decline of grassroots TF2 communities.

Although there's nothing inherently wrong with skill-based matchmaking systems like Glicko, the issue lies in how they're applied in TF2. In this game, a player's effectiveness is often shaped more by team composition, class synergy, and spontaneous cooperation than by consistent individual performance—something Glicko isn't designed to account for. The Quickplay system offered a more flexible and socially oriented approach, where players had the power to seek out and create balanced games themselves instead of having it done for them. While not without flaws, these systems better reflected TF2's emergent gameplay and community-driven nature. We're not calling for a full return to the past, but rather a thoughtful integration of proven features that support TF2's unique gameplay into a modern framework.

Many of the issues in Casual Mode could be addressed by reintroducing key features from the previous Quickplay system, ideally in a modernized form that builds on its strengths while addressing past limitations. Features worth reconsidering include:

- **45-minute map timers (-mp_maxrounds 0, +mp_timelimit 45)**, encouraging longer, more cohesive match experiences.
- **Real-time team scrambling (+mp_scrambleteams_auto 1, +mp_scrambleteams_auto_windifference 2)**, using actual in-match performance via a player's accumulated points rather than outdated data from prior games.
- **Manual team selection and switching (-mp_forceautoteam 0, +mp_allowspectators 1)**, a quality-of-life option that worked alongside effective auto-balance logic and allowed people to choose if they wanted to play with or against their friends.
- **Ad-hoc server joining (~tf_mm_strict 0)**, which allowed friends to quickly and easily join each other's games.
- **Inclusion of Valve servers in the server browser (~tf_mm_strict 0)**, allowing players to choose and instantly connect to an official game server at their own discretion.
- **Inclusion of vanilla community servers in its game coordinator (OpenQuickplayDialog)**, which helps promote and flourish communities, extended the life of the game and provided moderation beyond Valve's own infrastructure.
- **Waiting for players pre-round timer (~mp_waitingforplayers_time 30)**, allowing for the game to get underway after the 30-second timer expires without having to wait for all players to connect, preventing any time wasting.
- **Real-time map voting (+sv_vote_issue_changelevel_allowed 1)**, giving players the privilege to vote on the next map at any given time based on what gamemode they were playing.
- **The ability to specify precise server criteria via an Advanced Server Options menu**, including filters for settings like no random crits, server size, respawn type, and map preferences, giving players control over the match environment before joining a game.

Implementing these features would require moving away from the current skill-based matchmaking structure in Casual Mode, a necessary shift to restore the balance, convenience, and spontaneity that defined TF2 at its best. Reintroducing these features—either by reviving Quickplay or by building a hybrid system—would restore much of what made TF2 fun, fair, and fast to pick up and play. Furthermore, these features would be wholly incompatible with the principles of Glicko skill-based matchmaking. TF2's implementation of using the Glicko system in a game that thrives on flexibility and emergent play often results in mismatched lobbies, unbalanced team compositions, and a lack of mid-match course correction. Hence, the removal of this system would be the most viable course of action. However, we also acknowledge that Casual Mode has introduced some useful elements, such as ping filtering, player XP levels, and individual map selection. These features could be incorporated into a new hybrid model that combines the strengths of both systems without sacrificing gameplay quality.

For the reasons stated above, we, the Team Fortress 2 Community, respectfully ask for a reformed version of the Quickplay system to be put in the game in any way, shape, or form to its game coordinator. We believe this will help restore the freedom of choice, balanced matches, and strong community support that TF2 was built on. It's time to bring these back in order for the game to thrive, grow, and be enjoyed by both new and veteran players for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Signed,

The Team Fortress 2 Community

WHY BRING BACK QUICKPLAY?

Quickplay was built for how TF2 was meant to be played: as a casual, team-focused game where fun, freedom, and creativity come first. It prioritized player choice, server variety, and social gameplay, allowing anyone to jump into matches with friends, discover community servers, and enjoy longer, more dynamic matches without rigid matchmaking restrictions.

In 2016, the Meet Your Match update introduced Casual Mode, replacing Quickplay with a skill-based matchmaking system. This update is widely regarded as the worst in TF2's history. Many players quit, major content creators moved to other games, and Valve's support for TF2 noticeably declined. The consequences of that shift are still felt today, and many players continue to express dissapointment over the removal of Quickplay.

Bringing back Quickplay—by getting rid of TF2's fundamentally flawed adaptation of the Skill-based Matchmaking system, reimplementing Quickplay's features while still retaining Casual's useful and QOL features—would restore what TF2 was always meant to be: accessible, social, and fun for everyone, not just those who can tolerate a flawed matchmaking system. It would make the game welcoming again for new players, while giving veterans the freedom they once had to shape their own game experience.

We are calling on VALVE to bring back Quickplay to Team Fortress 2. This campaign is driven by a desire to restore the accessibility, consistency, and gameplay integrity that Quickplay offered: a system that better served both new and veteran players alike.

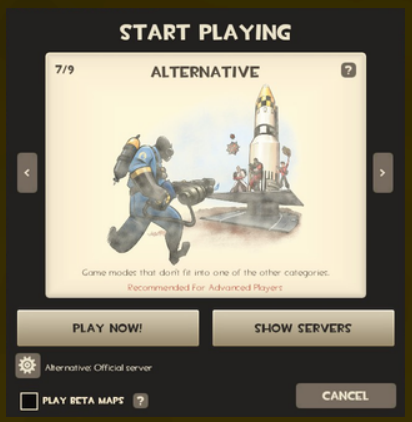
To support this effort, we will be sending an open letter and the results of a recently conducted community survey document regarding Casual and Quickplay directly to VALVE Headquarters, both digitally and through physical mail. These documents outline the long-term consequences of Casual Mode, the historical value of Quickplay, and the strong demand for its return.

As consumers and dedicated members of the TF2 community, we believe it is our right to voice our concerns and advocate for the improvement of a product we continue to support. This is not just a protest, it is a constructive appeal to help TF2 thrive again for years to come.

WHAT IS QUICKPLAY?

Quickplay was an automated server selection tool that connected players directly to servers without relying on strict matchmaking. Players would be presented with each gamemode, then press either “Play Now” for an instant connection or use the “Show Servers” option for more control. Once either option was selected, the TF2 client contacted the Steam Master Server List—which lists all available servers—and, using client-side processing, determined the best fit based on player count, latency, map, VAC status, and other eligibility criteria. Community servers also factored in a reputation score from the game coordinator, calculated from data such as player dwell time, favorites, blacklists, and possibly other hidden metrics.

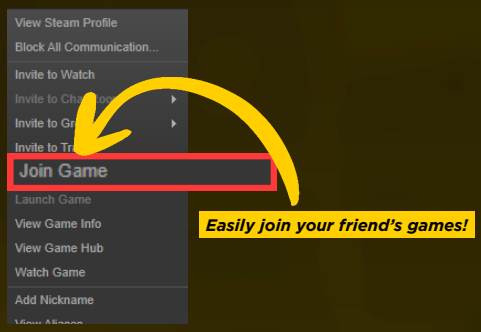
If “Play Now” was chosen, Quickplay automatically connected to the highest-scoring server. If “Show Servers” was selected, the system displayed a shortlist ranked by similar metrics, allowing players to pick a server of their choosing from a user-friendly list. Quickplay let you search for both Valve official servers and eligible community servers, defaulting to the former unless community servers were explicitly enabled through the “Advanced Options” menu *(more on that on Page 2)*. These community servers had to meet certain requirements: VAC security, official maps only, no sv_cheats or mp_tournament, no deceptive plugins or intrusive ads, no player count manipulation, and compliance with standard gameplay settings. Additional protections blocked HTML MOTDs and forced redirects to prevent abuse.



WHAT IS QUICKPLAY?

Players could also bypass Quickplay entirely with "ad-hoc connections", by joining official Valve servers through the legacy server browser, their friends list, or the developer console's "connect" command. This flexibility, combined with the ability to freely choose or instantly join games, made Quickplay both accessible and player-driven, unlike modern matchmaking systems.

Valve's official servers ran the vanilla server ruleset which offered consistent quality-of-life features, including 45-minute map timers, team selection on join, spectator mode, real-time map voting, and automatic team balancing and scrambling. The "Advanced Options" menu allowed for community servers to be incorporated into your search—with certain non-vanilla filters to choose from, such as player capacity, respawn times, random crits, and damage spread—helping players find a game that matched their preferences.



Corporations Are NOT Your Friend

By SimplyKat*

In recent years, there's been a noticeable shift in the gaming sphere where players defend corporations as if they were under attack, treating them more like beloved friends than billion-dollar businesses. Whenever someone dares to criticize a company's anti-consumer practices, exploitative monetization, or outright negligence, defenders rush in to say: "They're doing their best." Or worse, "It's not that bad. Stop complaining."

This mindset is dangerous. It gives corporations a free pass to continue harmful behavior without accountability. And nowhere is this clearer than in two communities I know well: Team Fortress 2's playerbase and, on the opposite end, Roblox's user community.

Valve and the TF2 Community: A Case of Stockholm Syndrome

"Stockholm syndrome is a proposed condition or theory that tries to explain why hostages sometimes develop a psychological bond with their captors." (wikipedia.org)

For nearly a decade, TF2 players have endured neglect. Bot infestations, broken matchmaking, and a lack of meaningful updates plagued the game. And yet, instead of demanding better, much of the community bent over backwards to excuse Valve's silence.

Whenever someone suggested reforms like re-implementing Quickplay or improving Casual matchmaking, others would respond with knee-jerk defense: "Valve owes us nothing." "Stop whining and be grateful the servers are still up."

This is classic corporate bootlicking. TF2 generated millions in revenue through keys, cosmetics, and microtransactions. Valve profited enormously, yet the community often treats any critique as a betrayal. The result? Players protect Valve more fiercely than Valve protects its own game.

Roblox and the #FreeSchlep Movement

On the flip side, Roblox's community has started pushing back. Unlike TF2 fans' "grateful silence," many in the Roblox sphere have loudly called out

Roblox Corporation for predatory monetization, weak child safety policies, and censorship of whistleblowers.

Roblox's player base is majority minors, and the company has already faced U.S. lawsuits alleging it enabled predatory behavior and exploitation. Instead of brushing this off, some in the Roblox community have raised awareness, staged campaigns, and even caught government attention.

This stands in stark contrast to the TF2 community, which often mocks or silences those demanding accountability. Roblox players—while far from perfect—at least recognize the truth: a corporation isn't your buddy, it's a business. And consumers do have the right to call out negligence and harmful practices, especially when microtransactions are involved.

Simply Stop Defending Billion-Dollar Companies

When we defend corporations unconditionally, we send them one message: exploit us with no consequences. Whether it's Valve neglecting a classic game while profiting off it, or Roblox monetizing children while ignoring safety concerns, the pattern is the same. These companies act in their own interest, not yours.

Gamers need to remember: you are not Valve's friend. You are not Roblox's friend. You are a customer, a user, a revenue stream. And if you want real change, you cannot afford to shield billion-dollar corporations from criticism. It's fine to love a game.

It's fine to love a game. It's fine to respect the developers who made something you enjoy. But it is not fine to mistake corporate goodwill for "friendship." Corporations exist to maximize profit, not to protect you, not to listen to you, not to prioritize your needs. And as long as players keep defending them like loyal fans instead of holding them accountable as consumers, the future of gaming will only get worse.

Random Notes

Guidelines for Creating Immersive Cosmetics, Taunts, and Unusuals

By Endi

When designing cosmetics, taunts, or unusuals for the game, it's essential to maintain the balance between creativity and the established aesthetic of the world. Whether crafting a worn-out, character-driven cosmetic or a taunt that captures the essence of a character's personality, every detail must align with the game's tone and fast-paced nature. The following guidelines offer a structured approach to creating elements that fit seamlessly into the game, ensuring they are both visually appealing and true to the unique atmosphere the game has cultivated.

For Cosmetics:

- Research and understand the stylistic differences of the Mercs and the game.
- Remember to keep the colours toned down and washed out—make them look used and worn down most of the time.
- Humorous cosmetics can be fun, but they shouldn't be overly silly. They must remain subtle and fit the game's style of humor—not the other way around. Check Demo's Eye photo and Pony Heads for better references.
- The best way to evaluate whether your cosmetic works is by using the following criteria:
    - Theme
    - Character
    - Direction
    - Loadout Compatibility
    - Texture Work

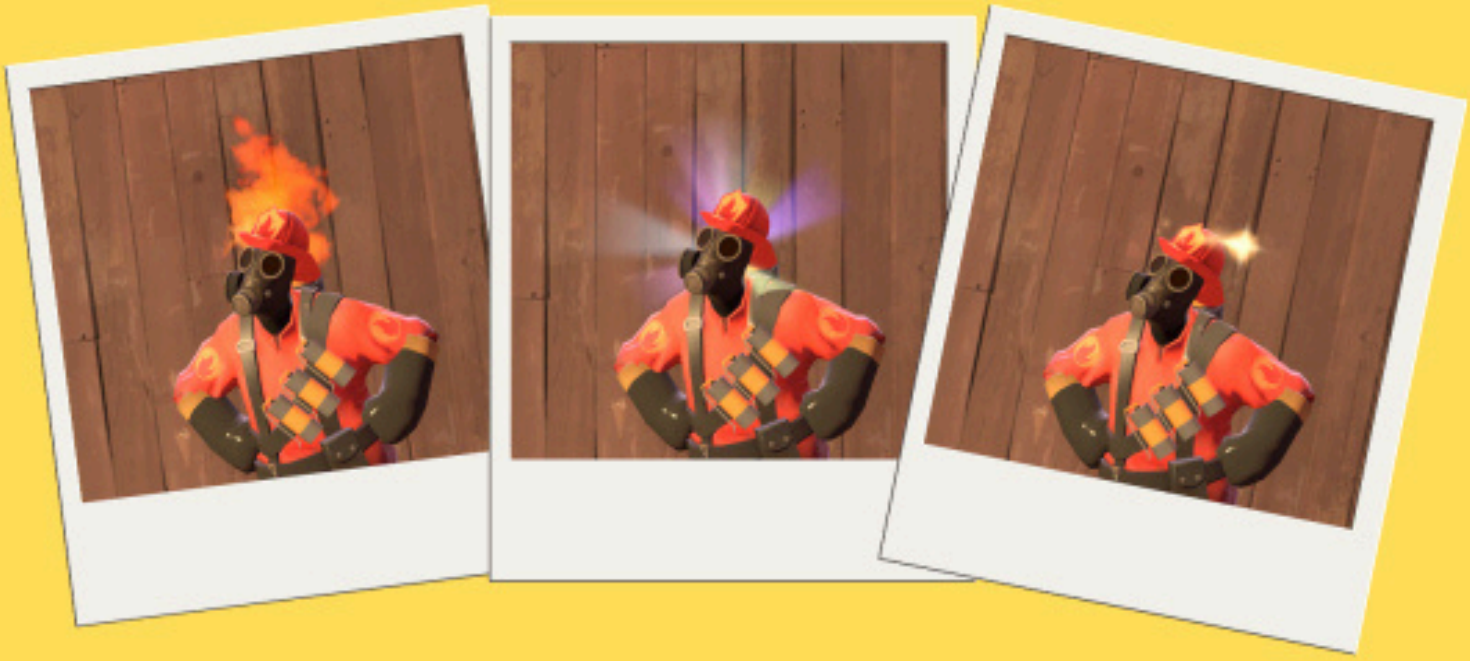
The more your cosmetic aligns with this criteria, the better it will be.

For Taunts:

- Study how the characters already act in-game. Imagine them performing the taunt you have in mind—if you can see their personality coming through in the action, you've got a good taunt (and vice versa).
- ALWAYS keep the taunt 4–5 seconds long to maintain the game's fast pacing. (Unless looped)
- Don't over-exaggerate the reactions—keep them expressive but not cartoony. Observe how the characters behave in their built-in taunts for reference.

For Unusuals:

- In general, keep them simple but not boring. Burning Flames is just fire, yet it looks badass.
- Don't create 10 different versions of the same effect—2 or 3 are enough, as long as each brings something new to the table.



JOIN TF2 NEXUS!

Brought to you by the TF2 Players, for the TF2 Players.

The TF2 Nexus is THE place for TF2 Community Members who are interested in making content for the game to gather, create ideas, and share their creations with others.

Workshoppers, artists, or just ordinary players are all welcome here!

TF2 NEXUS

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I WANT YOU

FOR THE WORKSHOP'S FINEST MAGAZINE

(CHECK NEXT PAGE)

WORKSHOP'S FINEST

IS LOOKING FOR MORE VOLUNTEERS!

Are you passionate about the arts, storytelling, or journalism? We're seeking dedicated volunteers to help bring our next "Workshop's Finest" magazine issue to life, and we want YOU to be part of the team!

We're specifically looking for volunteers in the following roles:

- **Artists (2D/3D)**

Whether you specialize in Source Filmmaker, Blender, or 2D art, we need your creativity to bring our vision to life. Help us illustrate stories, create stunning visuals, and design layouts that captivate our audience.

- **Writers**

Are you a wordsmith with a flair for storytelling? We need writers who can craft compelling articles, features, and creative pieces that showcase the heart of the TF2 community and beyond.

- **Journalists**

Have a nose for news and a passion for investigating the truth? We're looking for journalists who can cover current events, write in-depth features, and provide thoughtful commentary on issues that matter.

What's in it for you?

If you join the WF Magazine team, you can build your creative portfolio with published work in each issue, Collaborate with a talented team of artists, writers, and editors, and gain experience in magazine production.

How to apply?

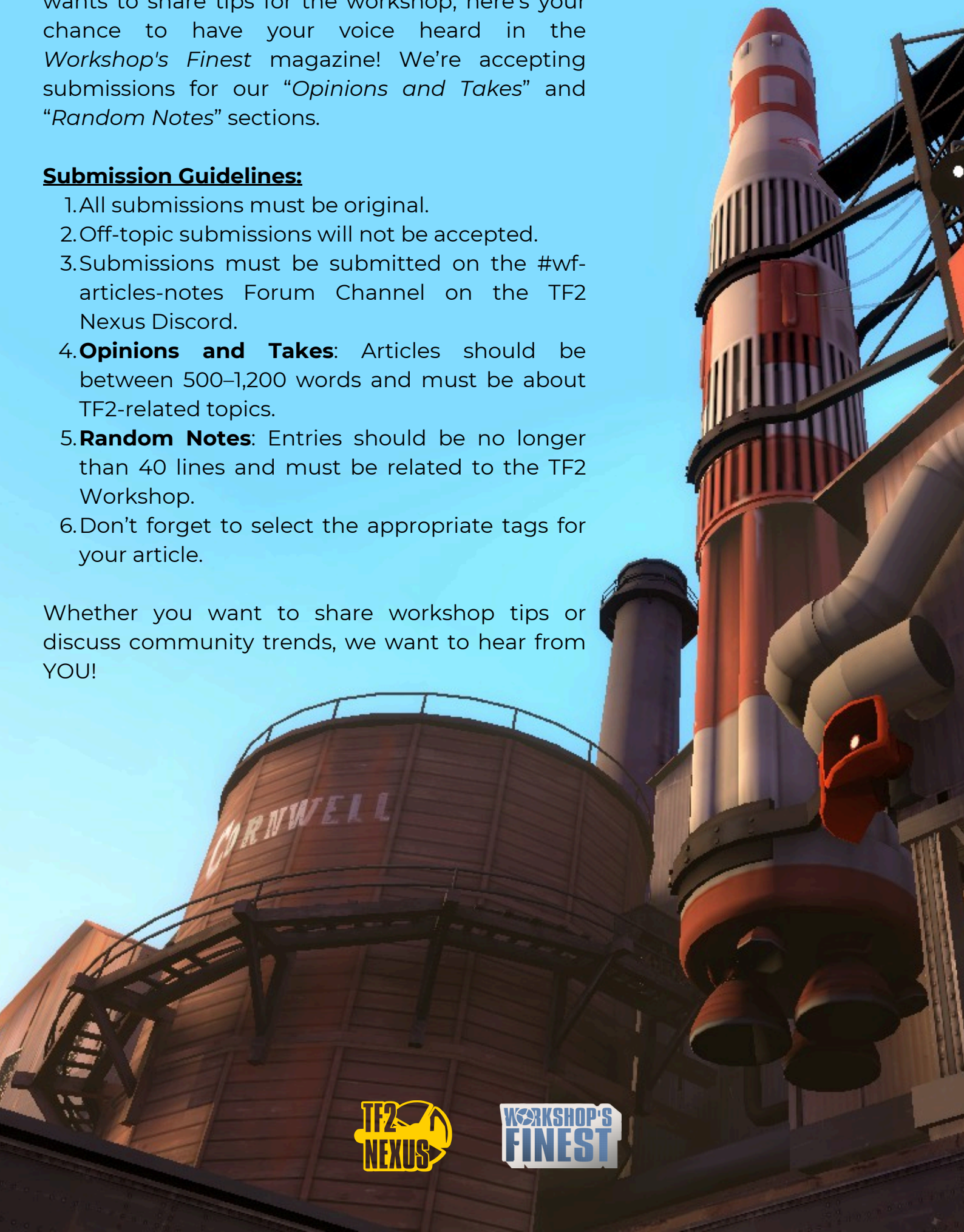
Fill out the form below and let us know which role you're interested in. We'll reach out to you with more details. Let's make something incredible together.

https://forms.gle/YsQWbgdjXq25Nqmy5

You can submit stuff for the Magazine!

Whether you're a veteran, F2P, or someone who wants to share tips for the workshop, here's your chance to have your voice heard in the *Workshop's Finest* magazine! We're accepting submissions for our "*Opinions and Takes*" and "*Random Notes*" sections.

Submission Guidelines:

1. All submissions must be original.
2. Off-topic submissions will not be accepted.
3. Submissions must be submitted on the #wf-articles-notes Forum Channel on the TF2 Nexus Discord.
4. **Opinions and Takes**: Articles should be between 500–1,200 words and must be about TF2-related topics.
5. **Random Notes**: Entries should be no longer than 40 lines and must be related to the TF2 Workshop.
6. Don't forget to select the appropriate tags for your article.

Whether you want to share workshop tips or discuss community trends, we want to hear from YOU!